



LEASIDE UNITED CHURCH  
*Celebration of Baptism*  
Approved by Council January 18, 2017

So many aspects of life are beyond our comprehension. In the spiritual realm, mystery and wonder, miracle and meaning, are open-ended concepts. At certain times in our life we are moved to wonder at the beauty of life, to ponder the sacred nature of life, or to dwell imaginatively on the presence of the soul in us. We encourage you to question and wonder along with us. While we may not have all of the answers you seek, we are a community of people who love one another and will welcome you as a unique creation of life and love.

In a world that continues to spin out of control, both literally and figuratively, it is often difficult to find ways to connect to the larger story, the story of God's love. Yet we know how important it is to give our lives a firm footing so that we may face difficult times with Hope, Courage, and Strength. Baptism is one way to do this. It connects us to the Source of Love and Life itself, to God, to the Creator of a universe of love, purpose, meaning and hope. This connection grounds us, and can be a source of strength and comfort for you and your family in good times and difficult times. Through baptism we are grounded in a story that continues around us and in us. It's an exciting and challenging journey!

### **Water as Symbol of Love**

Water is an integral part of our life. We are all made of water. We cannot live without it.

Love is an integral part of our life. We are all formed by Love. We cannot live without it.

The symbol of water is one which we share with all religions, a symbol of the deep connection we have to the primary source of life, and a sign of the source of all that is good, compassionate, and life-giving in our world.

When Jesus stepped into the public eye some 2000 years ago, his first act was his own baptism. He went down to the Jordan river, where his cousin John was baptizing people into a new "Way" of living, and stepped into the water so John could offer him this gift. We see in the water a symbol of the never ending cycle of life and love, a symbol of the constant flow of grace and goodness from God's heart, a symbol of hope when life seems more like a desert than a dew-dripped morning. This is where Jesus started his ministry.

This is where we begin our faith journey too. We step up to the front of the church. And there in front of all of us stands a font, a basin with water for baptism. We let the water flow over our heads, a symbol that it covers our whole body, our whole being. We let the waters of blessing permeate our being, and we open ourselves to its touch. We let the water fill the empty wells in our souls, quench our lonely hearts, and refresh the rivers of our own courage and compassion. The water blesses, just as Love blesses and sustains us on our life's journey.

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**Baptism and Radical Welcome**

Baptism is a radical welcome, an entrance into the larger family of the church, which includes everyone who has made a commitment to this journey of faith. The waters of baptism remind us of our diversity, our connection with all peoples. They remind us of that man named Jesus, who loved to eat with strangers and those society did not consider acceptable, and who challenged us to expand our understanding of who we should love.

Sometimes adults are baptised, sometimes infants, sometimes children. When a youth or adult is baptised, they make a personal commitment to the journey of Christian faith. For infants and young children, this commitment is made by parents or guardians until the time they are old enough to decide themselves. For children not yet old enough to make a mature promise, parents or guardians make promises, but we add an age appropriate promise for the child.

As an Affirming Congregation, Leaside United Church is committed to creating a safe and welcoming space for all people. We are overjoyed to welcome members of the LGBTQ+ community in baptism, as well as children from all family types – such as single parent, same sex parents, heterosexual parents, and those raised by grandparents or guardians. Whatever family you come from and are creating for yourself, you are welcome!

Even though baptism is by its very nature a Christian ceremony, we know different religious traditions are often represented within the same household. We do not see this as a barrier. If you have any questions, we'd be happy to talk to you about them. Our belief is that baptism opens doors rather than closes them, a step on the journey.

**Baptism and Promises**

In baptism we celebrate three way promises: God's unfailing and unconditional love, the commitment of the baptismal families, and the welcome and shared commitment of the community. The waters of baptism are a visible, tangible symbol of what is already true: the presence of God's love. This circle of love is wide and encompassing. In baptism, this does not change. Instead, you meet this promise with promises of your own to live into this sacred love.

The congregation makes promises as well: commitments to teach and learn from those being baptised, to ask questions and grow in faith, to live with compassion, courage, and caring. Baptism is not a solitary event, but an expression of community. Our baptisms take place as a part of our service of worship, so that the entire congregation can celebrate with you. We do this to demonstrate the communal nature of the faith-based life. Private baptisms isolate families from the community, and so happen only in a state of emergency or distress.

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### **Baptism and Belonging**

We hope that you (or your child) will find many circles of belonging that offer ongoing support and care in all stages of our lives. We believe that the Church community, a family of faith, offers a unique opportunity to connect and belong, especially in a world which sometimes seems to place a higher value on individual achievement than on communal goals and service to others. Our church family can be a place where these values are not only taught, they are lived. We try to practice what we preach! This is why we are interested in justice, in social issues, and are involved in dozens of different outreach projects. Through our combined efforts, we truly believe that we can make the world a more compassionate, more connected, and more just place for all persons.

In worship, Sunday School, youth group, adult education activities, outreach work and other ways, we try to learn and live our values. As a community, we need time together to do this – even when all of our lives are busy. With your baptismal promises, we expect you will choose to spend time with us, to gather as community, to learn and grow together, to ask questions and strive to serve others. Just as we choose to spend time with you. This is a commitment we make, and ask you to be intentional about as well.

### **More about Preparation and Baptism at Leaside United Church**

If you are considering baptism for yourself or your child, please speak to our minister about the process. We will spend time together discussing the significance of baptism and the kinds of promises we are making, as well as practical details and a decision about the date. We will also plan a time to walk through the baptism, so that everyone knows what to expect. As a sacrament – a gift of God not of us – there is no fee for baptism.

Many people invite friends and family to attend the baptism service. We can reserve pews at the front if requested. Any children are very welcome to join the Sunday School program for the day, which begins after the baptism takes place.

Particularly for infants and young children, think about choosing comfortable clothes. We do not have a dress code. There is space available to change at the church before the service if that is convenient. We also have a rocking chair in the sanctuary, if any infant is feeling a little restless. For our part, we don't mind crying babies or toddlers on the run – it's all part of the wonder of life!

We ask that photos not be taken during the service, so that everyone may focus on the sacred moment rather than getting the best image. Our minister is happy to join the family for photos by the font before or after the service, and you may take as many additional family photos as you would like.

### **You are Welcome Here**

Please contact the church by phone **416-425-1253**, or email our **Office Administrator** ([leaside.admin@bellnet.ca](mailto:leaside.admin@bellnet.ca)) or **Minister** ([emily@leasideunited.org](mailto:emily@leasideunited.org)).